

Memorandum



Date: November 28, 2007

To: Honorable Chairman Bruno A. Barreiro
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager

Subject: Report on Citizens on Patrol Program

HPSC
Agenda Item No. 7(C)

This information is provided in response to Resolution R-1018-07 adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on September 4, 2007, which requires a report identifying the feasibility, advisability and costs associated with establishing a Citizens on Patrol (COP) Program by the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD).

According to the National Crime Prevention Council, a COP Program may be intended for understaffed police departments in small cities that find it difficult to patrol residential areas with the frequency that residents prefer. MDPD is the largest police department in the Southeastern United States, with 4,765 employees. The United States Census Bureau estimates that Miami-Dade County population was 2.4 million in 2006, making it the most populous county in Florida and the eighth most populous county in the United States, and encompasses more than 2,000 square miles (larger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware).

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) National Law Enforcement Policy Center, reports that there are a limited range of duties and responsibilities for volunteer activities in the law enforcement field. Their report, dated March 2005, excludes any road patrol activities for a COP program, as there are limitations necessitated by liability issues. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement advises that the State of Florida has 299 police departments, of which 33 departments, or 9%, have COP programs.

There are a number of different volunteer-oriented programs run by MDPD which meet the IACP guidelines and allow opportunity for citizens' participation, including:

- **Citizens' Volunteer Program** – currently there are 116 citizen volunteers who provide support to MDPD in a number of different, non-classified ways; these programs help to foster understanding of MDPD operations and provides financial savings through performance of civilian duties;
- **Citizens' Crime Watch** – this program has been active for over 20 years, and helps to create an alliance between citizens and police to address crime problems in community neighborhoods; this is an excellent program designed to empower citizens to work together with law enforcement to fight crime;
- **Citizens' Police Academy** – conducted over 14 years, this program offers civilians with civic interests an exposure to the "police experience", a 13-week evening program enabling participants to better understand police training, procedures, and philosophy through classes on topics such as firearms and use of force, stress management, patrol procedures, domestic violence, and others;
- **Citizens' Advisory Committee** – this program operates in each police district to facilitate police/citizen communication and enhance MDPD's relations with the community; these citizen committees meet on a monthly basis with district command staff to share information and concerns on a variety of community issues;

- **Public Service Aide** – this volunteer program was specifically implemented to assist MDPD with similar areas that might be accomplished with a COP program; there are currently 97 trained public service aides who provide civilian assistance across the community;
- **Police Reserve Officer** – there are currently over 60 trained police reserve officers in this program, which enables interested citizens to volunteer to work side-by-side with a full-time police officer; these volunteers complete a ten-month academy and are assigned to uniform patrol, requiring a minimum of 16 hours per month, and attend continuing education training required by MDPD;
- **Miami-Dade Crime Stoppers** – this community action program gives citizens the opportunity to become involved in the fight against crime, working as partners to reduce crime; this is a successful program that is comprised of three segments (the community, law enforcement and the media) working as partners towards the goal of reducing crime;
- **Command Staff Night Out** – MDPD command staff, accompanied by Neighborhood Resource Unit officers and staff from other County and government agencies (Team Metro, Florida Department of Children and Families, State Attorney's Office) walk neighborhoods on a door-to-door basis to establish lines of communication and listen to/address community concerns. This has been overwhelmingly embraced by the community and has resulted in considerable intelligence regarding criminal activity.

Fiscal Impact

The design of a COP Program would incorporate eight patrol districts and would require a minimum staffing of 80 volunteers to start. This would permit the initial assignment of ten volunteers to each district, allowing for a viable program. The estimated cost to implement this program is approximately \$715,000, with recurring annual costs of \$107,000. These costs include such items as: applicant processing cost for the initial 80 volunteers; mandatory training classes to address both safety and liability issues patterned after the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Law Enforcement Auxiliary Program Guide, excluding 145 training hours that include firearms and extensive defensive tactics; several hours of departmental required training regarding MDPD operations, policies and procedures; marked vehicles equipped similar to those driven by the PSAs; uniforms; and portable police radios.

Collectively, the eight existing citizen programs have proven to be a cost effective way to provide opportunities for citizens to work together with police at the community level to reduce crime and at the same time facilitate communication and police/community relations. These programs fulfill the IACP's guidelines as outlined in the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center's report. Each has been designed and implemented with consideration to both departmental and County liability issues. In consideration of the effectiveness of existing programs and budget constraints, a new COP program may not be feasible at this time. MDPD will continue to evaluate existing initiatives with regard to effectiveness, costs, to expand citizen involvement to further prevent and reduce crime.


Assistant County Manager